

*Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau*

# Quarterly Report

**FY17, Q4**  
April – June 2017



**Sports**

**Meetings**

**Bookings**

**News &  
Notes**

**Marketing**

The mission of the Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau is to drive quality of life and economic growth for our citizens through tourism marketing and destination development.

# RACVB Board of Directors

- David Anderson (Chairman), Anderson Japanese Gardens
- Bill LaFever (Vice Chairman), Bill Doran & Co.
- Tim Meyers (Treasurer/Secretary), WIFR-TV
- Chad Anderson, Anderson Chrysler Dodge Jeep Ram
- Marcus Bacon, Radisson Hotel & Conference Center
- Nathan Bryant, Rockford Area Economic Development Council
- Robert Burden, City of Loves Park
- Todd Cagnoni, City of Rockford
- Patrick Curran, Curran's Orchard
- Bryan Davis, SupplyCore
- Patricia Diduch, Village of Rockton
- Einar Forsman, Rockford Chamber of Commerce
- Kevin Frost, City of Rockford
- Jennifer Furst, FurstStaffing
- Amanda Hamaker, Winnebago County
- Ben Holmstrom, William Charles Construction
- Roberta Holzwarth, HolmstromKennedy PC
- Marco Lenis, Vocational Rehabilitation Management
- Ted Rehl, City of South Beloit
- Jay Sandine, Rockford Park District

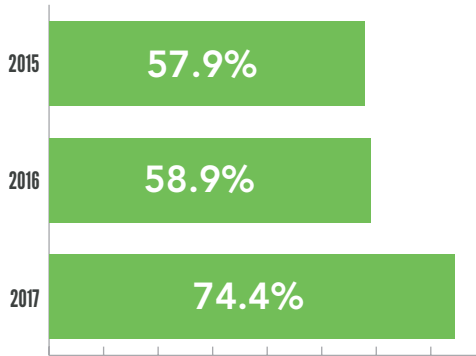
# RACVB Staff

- John Groh, President/CEO
- Josh Albrecht, Director of Marketing & Public Affairs
- Lindsay Arellano, Director of Sales & Service
- Jenny Caiozzo, Destination Development Manager
- Heidi Gee, Office Coordinator/Receptionist
- Jennie Hahn, Group Services Specialist
- Fred Harris, Brochure Distribution Assistant
- Mary Holmes, Group Services Manager
- Janet Jacobs, Marketing Assistant
- Lindsey Kromm, Accounting Assistant
- Andrea Mandala, Marketing & Communications Manager
- Bea Miller, Destination Development Assistant
- Joanne Nold, Director of Finance & Administration
- Kristen Paul, Executive Assistant
- Nick Povalitis, Sports Destination & Sales Manager
- Tana Vettore, Director of Destination Development
- Elizabeth Wood, Creative Services Manager

# Winnebago County Hotel Statistics

(January – June 2017)

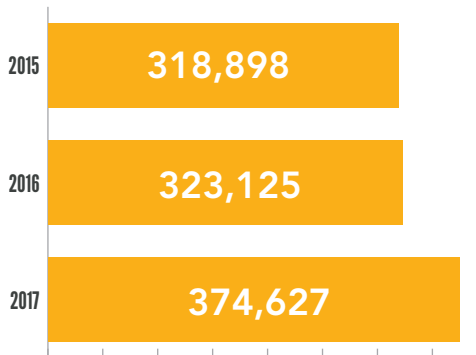
## YTD Hotel Occupancy



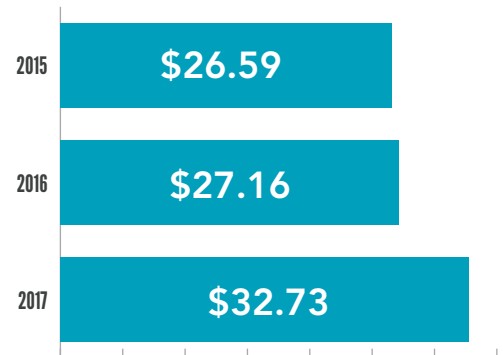
## YTD Average Room Rate



## YTD Hotel Room Demand (rooms sold)



## YTD Revenue (in millions)



## Sister City Reports

**CLUJ-NAPOCA, ROMANIA** — The visit of 18 Romanian dancers in June was a great success! The dancers performed seven times, including a private performance for city officials. The performance at the Peace Plaza was especially notable as they connected with a veteran and were included in an interview.

**LIDKÖPING, SWEDEN** — A group of 10 construction students and two instructors from the De la Gardiegymnasiet's construction program in Lidköping, Sweden, were in Rockford for two weeks in April. The group was giving a helping hand to the renovations of Swedish Historical

Society's Nordic Cultural Center. The opportunity to come to Rockford as part of the Lidköping and Rockford partnership has been a great boost for the vocational programs (construction and nursing) at the De la Gardiegymnasiet.



**BORGHOLM, SWEDEN** — The Midsommar Fest celebration was held June 16-17 and featured a well-known ABBA tribute band as well as Vikings to Volvos car show.



# News & Notes

## Fred VanVleet Summer Camp and Fan Fest

Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau and its Brand Ambassador, Toronto Raptors guard Fred VanVleet, teamed up for the first ever **Fred VanVleet Summer Camp and Fan Fest** on June 23-25 at the UW Health Sports Factory.

The basketball camp, designed for boys and girls in kindergarten through high school, had **220 kids** participate. Attendees learned skills, drills and competed in contests during the camp. In addition, the weekend kicked-off with the first ever FVV Fan Fest featuring a night of activities for the whole family,

including YMCA Bouncy Houses, Arachnid Dart Boards, Patriots Gateway Boxing, Rockford Park District programs and the popular Slam Dunk and Three Point Contests. Attendance for the weekend was **more than 2,700 people**.

"Giving back to the community is important to me. I hope through the FVV Summer Camp that we can impart some of the wisdom I have gained to the youth in the Rockford region," said VanVleet. "I'm looking forward to having a lot of fun at this event and sharing some great moments with the community."



Sport Stories, a Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau production as part of the organization's Bring Your Game 2 Rockford (BYG2RKFD) campaign, featured keynote speaker **Corey Anderson**, Rockton native and Ultimate Fighting Championship #6 Light Heavyweight in the World. In addition, a guest panel featuring **Fred VanVleet** (Toronto Raptors and RACVB Sports Tourism Ambassador), **Angel Martinez** (Team USA Boxing and Gold Gloves National Champion) and **Misty Opat** (4-time NJCAA Women's Basketball Champion Head Coach at Rock Valley College) highlighted an evening focused on advancing the positive impact of sports tourism in the Rockford region.



More than 100 guests turned out to hear from our sports stars as they shared stories about growing up in Rockford, what it takes to achieve success, and what they hope to accomplish in the future. For those not able to attend, all four local television news channels broadcasted live from the event to help capture the stories.

"Sport Stories is really about sports tourism as a platform to give back. There are so many people from the community who are making an impact through sports and we want to help move that narrative forward. Corey Anderson is a proud Rockton native and national superstar in the world of mixed martial arts, and we're honored to have him back home as our keynote speaker," said Nick Povalitis, Sports Destination and Sales Manager. "And with our championship guest panel, we're going to look at what success means locally and beyond through the eyes of some of our region's best ambassadors."



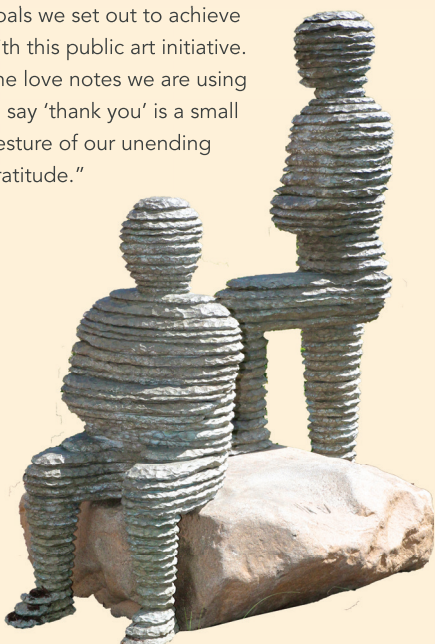
# News & Notes

## Downtown Sculptures Say Goodbye

The Rockford Area Convention & Visitors Bureau invited the public to write **love notes** as a farewell and thank you to the world renowned artists, **Boaz Vaadia** and **Hans Van de Bovenkamp**, for their generous loan of sculptures to our community from June 2015 – May 2017. Note-writing stations were set up at select locations in downtown Rockford during the Rockford Area Arts Council's Spring ArtScene.

Originally scheduled to be on display from June 2015 – May 2016, the RACVB worked with the artists to extend the stay because of the overwhelming response from the community.

"It has been an amazing two years getting to know the artists, their stories and displaying their works of art throughout downtown Rockford. Then, to witness the joy they have brought to our residents and visitors is truly incredible, said Tana Vettore, RACVB director of destination development. "The sculptures became part of the fabric of our downtown, enhanced our appreciation for public art and created a sense of community which were goals we set out to achieve with this public art initiative. The love notes we are using to say 'thank you' is a small gesture of our unending gratitude."



## Rockford Region Sites & Attractions See Increase in 2016 Attendance Numbers

**More than 7.6 million guests experienced the Rockford region**

Rockford area sites and attractions saw an upswing in overall guest attendance in 2016. An additional 76,930 guests experienced the region's great museums, sports facilities and entertainment venues for a total of **6,789,077** (up from 6,712,147 in 2015). When combined with event attendance numbers, the region totaled **7,646,375 guests**.

Increases at **Discovery Center Museum** (195,302 visitors), **Nicholas Conservatory & Gardens** (67,561 visitors) and **Anderson Japanese Gardens** (60,922 visitors) are all key indicators of the rise of Rockford as a destination for travelers.



While overall sites and attractions numbers increased, overall event attendance had a slight reduction of 92,760 guests compared to the prior year with the biggest loss being from the discontinuing of Rockford AirFest which alone accounted for 150,000 guests in 2015. Events such as the **Rock River Anything that Floats Race** (20,000 guests), **Rockford Town Fair** (22,000 guests) and **Tough Mudder** (15,000 guests) have helped to sustain the overall events numbers year over year.





# Marketing

## Promoting Rockford to Rockford

RACVB's Marketing & Communications Manager presented on Social Media effectiveness as part of the **Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence (NICNE) accreditation course**. Topics focused on content strategies, scheduling and how to turn posts into direct return on investment so nonprofits of all sizes can create their own marketing plans for long-term success.

Winnebago Buy Local, a coalition of local grassroots businesses, organizations and citizens in Rockford, hosted a networking event about **"How to get your press to the local media"** for local area businesses. RACVB's Marketing & Communications Manager participated as a panelist along with local broadcast, radio and print publication media partners. It was a way to engage our local businesses on the best ways to share their content and a great way to connect these partners with the local media helping to spread their messaging.

### Summer Love

There are lots of fun events, activities and things to do in the Rockford region all year long – especially during the summer months – so the RACVB team put together a list of recommended activities, events and places to visit as part of the **Summer Love** calendar of events.

This quarterly themed list was featured on the gorockford.com website, social media sites, blog posts, eblasts and in advertisements locally and regionally.



## New Media Partnerships

In May, RACVB collaborated with guest blogger and local foodie expert, Rachel Cordano from **Rockford Cravings**. Every other week, Rockford Cravings submits a blog about her food and drink adventures throughout the Rockford region. This blog is also shared through our RACVB social media pages.

In June, the RACVB partnered with the Elgin tourism bureau to jointly host the **Midwest Travel Bloggers** on their roadtrip through the Midwest. These two bloggers continuously reach over 9k active users and have over 11k pageviews combined on Facebook. While on their trip in the Rockford region they hosted a TweetReach focused on topics related to Midwest Travel. This generated over **5 million impressions**, reached **264,902 accounts** and 663 overall tweets from 65 contributing influencers.



## Website Statistics

### Website Traffic Sources



### Most Searched Terms

- Things To Do
- Rock Cut State Park
- Magic Waters

### Most Searched Events

- APR** Live Music at Big Al's Bar
- MAY** Young at Heart Festival
- JUNE** Bruce Munro: LIGHT

### Most Searched Attractions/Restaurants

- APR** Anderson Japanese Gardens
- MAY** Discovery Center Museum
- JUNE** Sinnissippi Gardens

# Marketing

## Advertising & Promotions

All print ads (magazine and newspaper) generated **5,138,100 total circulation, impressions and readership**. Eighteen news releases were sent out to our local media partners that helped generate content shared through regular weekly radio spots with Mid-west Family Broadcasting (WXRX, The Bull), radio spots with Townsquare Media (WROK), live mentions with local TV (WIFR, WREX, WQRF, WTVO) and through print publications Rockford Register Star and The Rock River Times. Through our Meltwater media software we tracked **2,085 media mentions** through broadcast, print, online and social media sources. Our messaging reached an estimated **195,419,030 potential viewers** across all major platforms with approximately **\$1.8 million in average ad value**. The top online sources were AssociatedPress.com, RRStar.com, 23 WIFR, WREX.com and MyStateline.com. The top broadcast sources were WTVO (ABC), WREX (NBC), WQRF (Fox), WZZM-GR (ABC) and WTAE-PIT (ABC).

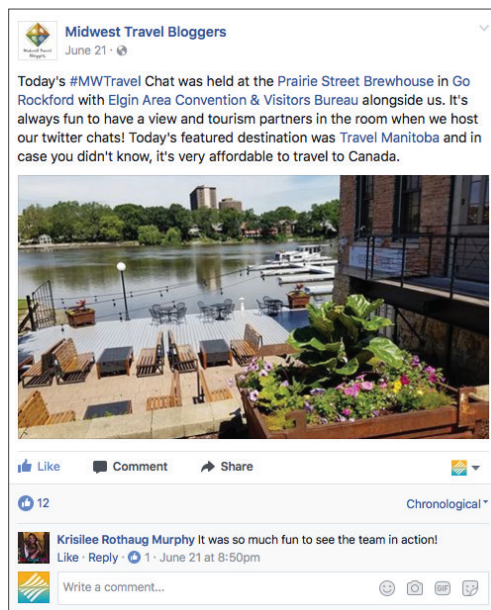
Ads were placed with the following organizations and publications this quarter: The Enjoy Illinois Fall/Winter edition, Rockford Register Star's special issue, American Road's Summer issue, Travel Midwest, Midwest Living, Destinations International (formerly DMAI), Food Traveler and a digital ad on rrstar.com. A retargeting ad was also created for UFC Fight Week and featured Corey Anderson, MMA fighter and Rockton native.

The RACVB worked with three publications to receive the following

earned media mentions this quarter: Chicago Tribune (Rockford Area Arts Council's ArtScene), Emerging Horizons (Laurent House) and Midwest Sports Planner full page Rockford write-up.



Chicago Tribune article mentions Rockford Spring ArtScene



Midwest Travel Bloggers' Facebook post

## Social Media



**Facebook**  
23,768 followers  
(287 increase)



**Instagram**  
7,923 followers  
(289 increase)



**YouTube**  
355,281 video views  
(29,891 increase)



**Twitter**  
6,184 followers  
(95 increase)

## Earned Media

(Jan - March, 2017)

RACVB uses **Meltwater**, a public relations management software, to track and report the effectiveness of media mentions and their ad value through various outlets; e.g., television, online, print, radio and social media.



**195,419,030**

Total impressions

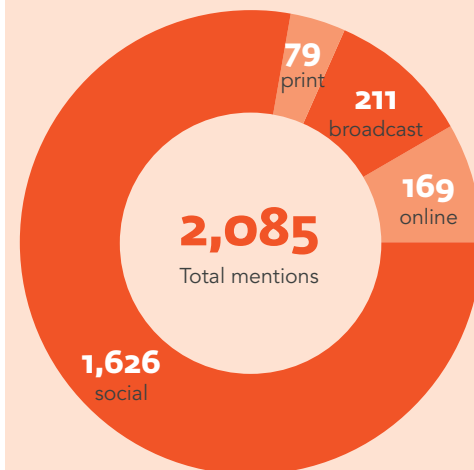


**\$1,800,000**

Average ad value

## Share of Voice

Total mentions by outlet type





# Sports Sales

## Sports Sales Highlights

### April Highlights

GoRockford Sports hit the ground running in April, as the team churned out a trio of bid proposals that included the 2018-22 Illinois High School Association (IHS) Boys and Girls Lacrosse State Finals, the 2019 U-18 Baseball World Cup USA Baseball Candidate City, and the 2017 American Cornhole Organization (ACO) Regional. RACVB also welcomed Premier SuperCopa representatives back to the region April 6 for a site visit in advance of their June event, followed by GoRockford's trip the next day to Dubuque, IA, for the **2017 Loras College Sports Business Summit**.

On April 14, RACVB hit the road again with a sales trip to Chicago for the **2017 Windy City Qualifier at McCormick Place**,

where the team met with USA Volleyball headquarter and USAV Great Lakes Region staff. Some of the team's highlight bookings in April impacted multiple counties, including the 2017 AAU Track Series (including the Central District Championships, Regional Championships and the Northern National Invitational that were scheduled at Belvidere North High School) and the 2017 Midwest Rugby U-24 All Star Tournament at the Rockton Athletic Fields in Rockton, IL.

### May Highlights

Site visits bookended the month of May, beginning on the first day of the month when Sports Planning Guide (Premier Travel Media) conducted a venues tour throughout town that yielded earned media weeks later. RACVB ventured to the Quad Cities with local hotel partner Rock Hospitality for the **2017 Sports Illinois Huddle**, a trade show May 8-9 that was co-produced by convention and visitors bureaus throughout the state and included more than 15 sports event owners. GoRockford

wrapped up a busy month Memorial Day weekend when it helped launch a multi-sport festival at the UW Health Sports Factory (UWHSF) by partnering with long-standing customer **America's Team Table Tennis Championships** and new-to-market **American Cornhole Organization**. After RACVB met with the ACO in Sacramento in March 2017 at NASC Symposium, GoRockford booked the 2017 ACO Rockford Tournament at the UWHSF to run concurrently with the 2017 America's Team Championships, an Edgeball Table Tennis production. While in town, ACO reps also conducted site visits to multiple venues across the region for future tournament bids.

### June Highlights

On June 1, site visits continued when JP Sports made another trip to the UW Health Sports Factory and Mercyhealth Sportscore Two's new indoor facility. Tough Mudder representatives made the trek to Rockford on June 6 to conduct some prep work in advance of the 2017 event, while Arizona- and Oregon-based State Basketball Championships (June 19) and our partners from Enjoy Illinois/Sports Illinois (June 22-23) also toured the Forest City's sports venues. GoRockford made its second trip in four months to

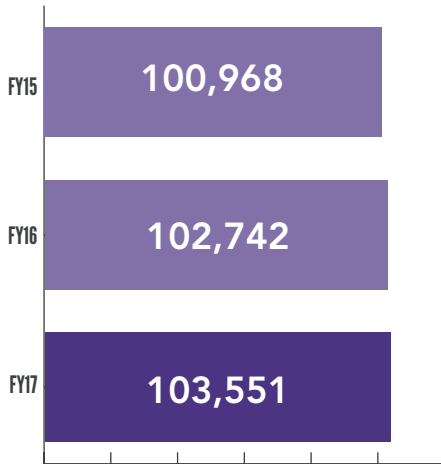
Bloomington, IL, to visit with IHS) officials in the middle of the month, right in the midst of a record-breaking soccer tournament servicing run for the region. In partnership with the Rockford Park District, the RACVB welcomed **Premier SuperCopa 2017** from June 8-11, which was supplanted only two weeks later by **Elite Clubs National League (ECNL) National Playoffs** as the largest soccer tournament that the community has ever hosted. Among June's featured bookings, the **2017 USSSA National Fastpitch Championships C 12U-14U** were solidified for Mercyhealth Sportscore One to help put a stamp on FY17.



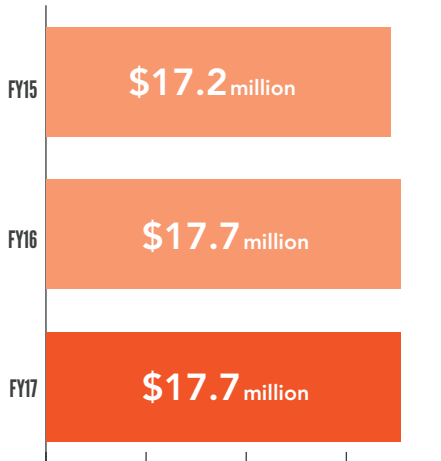
America's Team Table Tennis Championships at UW Health Sports Factory

# Meetings, Servicing & Bookings

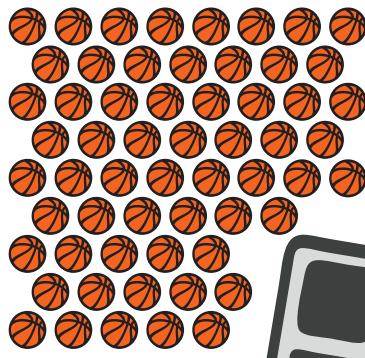
## Future Hotel Room Nights Booked



## Estimated Economic Impact

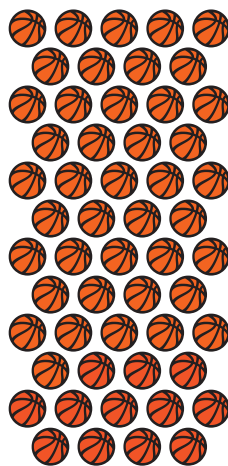


## Fred VanVleet Summer Camp by the Numbers



**220**

kids participated in the FVV camp



**47** kids sponsored by fans and businesses



**1**

Golden Gloves Boxing Champion (Angel Martinez) giving boxing lessons

**180**

FVV t-shirts printed by Rockford Art Deli during the Fan Fest

**2,700**

people came to the UW Health Sports Factory for the FVV Summer Camp & Fan Fest

**156**

stories about the FVV Summer Camp & Fan Fest (with a potential reach of 69 million views!)



3-point shots in 1 minute made by Fred

**FRED**

13

**TIME**

0:50

**MAX POINTS**

15

## Booking Highlights for the Region



### Rock River Off-Season Competition (R2OC)

#### 2017 Rock River Off-Season Competition

July 29, 2017  
300 room nights  
\$54,000 EEI

### Illinois Youth Soccer Association (IYSA)

#### State Cup and Presidents Cup

November 3 - 5, 2017  
1,000 room nights  
\$191,520 EEI

### Illinois Kids Wrestling Federation

#### IKWF 2018 Tournament

March 9 - 11, 2018  
2,000 room nights  
\$513,000 EEI

### 360 Sports and Events

#### 2018 AAU Central District Gymnastics Championships

April 6 - 8, 2018  
575 room nights  
\$103,500 EEI

**Total Q4 Booked Highlights EEI = \$862,020**